Mackenzie Valley Review Board

Mackenzie Valley Highway Environmental Assessment

Technical re-scoping session report

November 2, 2026

1. Introduction

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (the Review Board, or MVEIRB) hosted **a technical re-scoping session on October 1, 2026,** to engage on potential changes to the scope of the environmental assessment (EA) and Terms of Reference (TOR). The Review Board's re-scoping followed the project scope change proposed by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT, the developer) in its letter about the expansion of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway. The technical re-scoping session was an opportunity for parties and their technical experts to:

- validate existing items in the Terms of Reference, and
- share ideas, issues, concerns, questions and comments about how the extended route to Inuvik may change what should be required in the Terms of Reference.



Figure 1: Image of GNWT's long-term MVH vision

2. Session structure

This document summarizes what the Review Board heard during the technical session, held in Yellowknife on October 1, 2026.

The session included:

- a **presentation from the Review Board** on the EA (see Appendix A for the Review Board's technical session presentation)
- a **presentation from the GNWT** on the proposed extension (see Appendix B for GNWT's presentation)
- short presentations on the **content of the Terms of Reference and GNWT's proposed revisions**, followed by **participants' comments and questions**

Parties and their technical experts attended this session (see Appendix C for the technical session participants' lists).

3. Information shared by GNWT

GNWT-INF, as the developer, introduced its updated Detailed Project Description for the project. It highlighted that the **project involves** approximately 775 km of new two-lane gravel highway, 30–35 new bridges, permanent and temporary borrow sources, work camps of up to 200 people, culverts, fibre line relocation, and reclamation of the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road. However, the GNWT proposed that the project **should not include** the Great Bear River Bridge, Mackenzie River Bridge (N'Dulee Crossing), Liard River Bridge, and the operation and maintenance of the Winter Road, as these are proposed as separate projects. GNWT also clarified that it is proposing four route options in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA), in response to feedback from Gwich'in communities. At this stage, the corridor is one kilometre wide between Wrigley and Norman Wells, and two kilometres wide between Norman Wells and the Dempster Highway. The additional width in the northern section provides flexibility for engineering and route refinement.

To inform re-scoping, the GNWT had prepared the following documents:

- GNWT draft revised Terms of Reference
- Draft Updated Project Description
- Draft Updated Project Description - Mapbook 1 of 3
- Draft Updated Project Description - Mapbook 2 of 3
- Draft Updated Project Description - Mapbook 3 of 3

4. Territorial and federal roles at the re-scoping sessions

The GNWT, the Major Projects Office (MPO), and the Northern Project Management Office (NPMO) attended the technical re-scoping session in person.

The **GNWT-INF**, as the developer, introduced its updated Detailed Project Description. **GNWT ECC-PAB** was also present in its role as Consultation coordinator on behalf of the territorial responsible Ministers on the future decision that will be made on the Review Board's Report of Environmental Assessment.

NPMO coordinates federal participation in board-led EA processes and supports unified federal submissions. It was present to hear comments and concerns from Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities in support of the Crown's consultation requirements.

MPO is responsible for streamlining federal processes. Should the project be listed under Schedule 1 of the *Building Canada Act (BCA)*,[1] the required federal authorizations that are set out in Schedule 2 of the BCA would be issued through a single Conditions Document. The MPO attended the re-scoping sessions to listen to community feedback on the project generally and answer questions on the listing process.



Figure 2: Technical re-scoping session

[1] From June 24 to October 1, 2026, MPO conducted consultation with potentially impacted Indigenous Governments and Organizations to guide its decision on whether the Mackenzie Valley Highway should be listed as a project of national interest.

5. What we heard

This section summarizes what parties said, and where applicable, indicates how GNWT or MVEIRB responded. Unless noted otherwise, the following comments were made by parties, either in person or participating virtually.

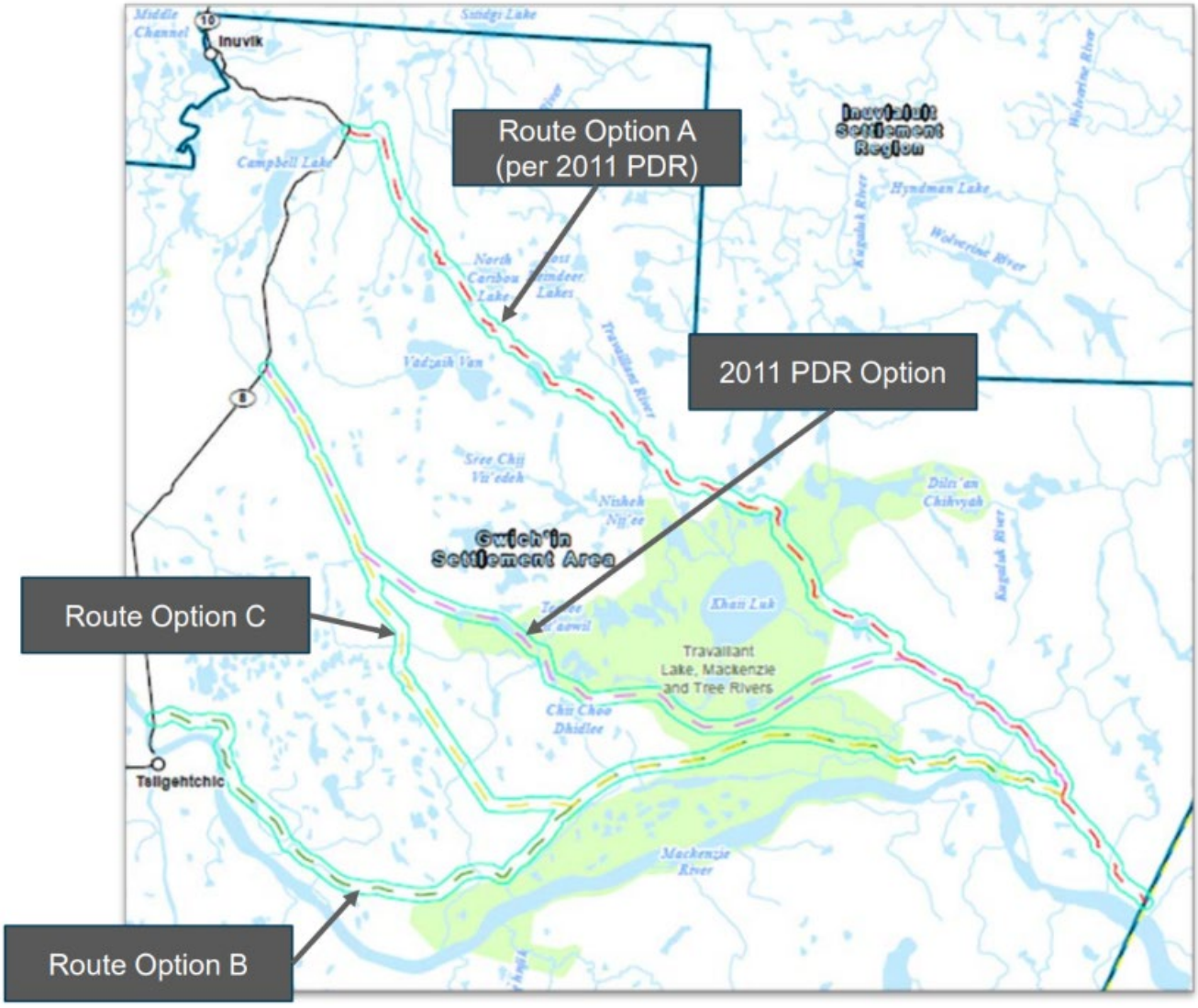


Figure 3: Map representing the four route options proposed by GNWT in the GSA

Route selection

- **Options vs. alternatives:** GNWT stated it will not propose a preferred route option in the DAR. GNWT will propose all four routes as options (see *Fig. 3*), rather than propose one preferred route and describe three other alternatives. The route choice is subject to future engagement in the northern part of the proposed project. There is no timeline yet for choosing a route. Parties said they would prefer a complete Revised DAR (with a preferred route).

    - **MVEIRB**: The EA would prefer to look at a preferred option; it would help parties focus their efforts on the intended route.
- **Gwich'in Land Use Plan**: Two of the proposed routes go through the Conservation area (see the Gwich'in Land Use Plan), which would require an amendment to the Gwich'in Land Use Plan. GNWT will consult with the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board for routing and mitigation. It will also consider the Gwich'in Land Use Plan's conditions and recommended actions in the route design. GNWT does not yet know how much of the proposed route corridor and travel lanes will pass through historic or protected areas. The TOR could request this information.
- **Information level:** The level of information available varies enormously for each route option. Some options have information from the Mackenzie Gas Project, the Fibre Line, past Project Description Reports, and others have none. That inconsistency might bias the decision. Parties and the Review Board need robust information on all route options to make the right decision. The decision should also consider information on land withdrawals and land claims provisions.
- **Climate change**: A lot of work has been completed in the past to assess the best corridor (in 1978 and in 2011). However, climate change impacts permafrost and the ecosystem year-round, year after year. As a result, past studies may no longer be accurate. Core assumptions need to be examined in light of historical conditions, existing knowledge and recent studies. The TOR should require the proponent to consider pre-existing, current information and predicted future conditions to ensure that earlier design decisions reflect today's reality and future conditions.



Figure 4: Parties at the technical re-scoping session

Project details

- **Fibre line**: GNWT has not yet confirmed whether it would relocate the fibre line if it does not select option A (see Figure 3) as the preferred route.
- **Quarries**: GNWT does not yet have information on the number and location of quarries, but it will include it in the Revised DAR.
- **Délı̨ne turnoff:** GNWT is considering having a laydown staging area at the turnoff before the winter road to Délı̨ne. Parties hope MVH will extend the winter road season for Délı̨ne. However, the project does not include any work on the winter road between the Délı̨ne turnoff and Délı̨ne.
- **Barge landings:** Barging is currently restricted because of low water levels. Should there be plans to increase barge landings for the highway to be built? What is the timeline to obtain more information on the suitability of barging conditions and plans in place to develop these landings?
    - **GNWT**: The unreliability of barging is one reason for this project. GNWT can provide more information on landings later.

Timelines

- **Construction timeline:** Construction of different segments is intended to start at different times. The GNWT will begin with segments that have the most complete design and information. The December 2027 construction start is a very optimistic timeline. It can only be possible if everything (EA, permitting, and licensing) goes well.
- **Contracting timeline**: The GNWT plans to tender commercial proposals from contractors in several periods.
- **Design timeline:** There is no set timeline for engineering and design work yet.
- **Working Groups timeline:** The GNWT noted in the DAR that the Community Readiness Strategy working groups would start work one year before construction. Based on the timeline, this work should start in December 2026. GNWT is still working towards that timeline. GNWT can provide more information in the future on how it will be established that commitments have been met.
- **EA timeline:** The more thorough the Revised DAR, the more efficient the EA will be (likely resulting in fewer Information Requests). MVEIRB is coordinating with the LWBs to make the permitting and licensing process more efficient.



Figure 5: GNWT responding to questions

EA process and scope

- **EA focus:** MVEIRB stated that the assessment will focus on impacts, route selection, and design criteria, while the regulatory process must abide by conditions and measures that minimize impact. An EA rarely includes full details of the final design.
- **Conformity determination:** The Revised DAR review needs a more thorough conformity determination to avoid a detailed, lengthy Information Request (IR) process.
- **GNWT's approach:** How do GNWT departments (like ECC) participate? Can they submit their expertise independently of GNWT-INF, for instance as appendices to the Revised DAR? It helps other parties know that experts are reviewing the project and what they have to say.
    - **GNWT**: To date, GNWT has been providing expert departmental feedback on the project through GNWT-INF.
- **Mitigation**: Some parties would like more information on actions and programs responding to concerns raised during engagement. The DAR already includes a section on commitments, but it could include more detail. MVEIRB will soon have a new public tool that will track engagement and issue mitigations.

- **Project approval:** Can GNWT legally advance the project toward construction if the EA for the entire project is not finished? It should be one EA for one project.
    - **MVEIRB:** Part 5 of the MVRMA must be complete for work to begin on any portions of the project within the EA's scope. The entire project needs Ministerial approval before work can proceed. All measures stemming from the EA related to authorizations must be included in the regulatory process (licensing and permitting), which is needed in advance of construction. The construction cannot begin until the EA is completed.

Terms of Reference

- **Subject of notes:** Lessons learned should be added as a Subject of Note; consolidating all lessons learned would make it easier for parties to track which lessons from other road projects like TASR and ITH are used for MVH.
- **Alternatives**: GNWT is not proposing to describe alternatives to the project or within the project, only construction alternatives. The TOR could require these alternatives.
- **Further comments**: MVEIRB mentioned that all detailed comments should be submitted to the ORS.



Figure 6: Parties at the technical re-scoping session

Other

- **Climate change**: Can GNWT respond to how this project meets the objectives for climate goals?
    - **GNWT**: Will take that question back.
- **Cumulative effects:** GNWT and MVEIRB clarified that section 10 is the summary of total cumulative effects. Section 7 describes what needs to be covered under each valued component.
- **Cumulative effect:** Cumulative effects are described as including reasonably foreseeable future projects. How can we consider projects that we are not yet quite sure about?
    - **GNWT** will use the information available to the best of its abilities to predict cumulative effects.
    - **MVEIRB:** We recommend that proponents not limit the cumulative effects section to projects that are currently permitted. MVEIRB can accept more qualitative data if quantitative data is not available, as described in the EIA guidelines, in Appendix H (Additional Cumulative Effects Guidance).
- **Collaboration**: Can GNWT include Indigenous Governments and organizations earlier in designing environmental and social mitigation measures?
    - **GNWT**: Will take that away.
- **Mitigation timelines:** Would GNWT object to having a requirement in the Revised DAR to link mitigation timelines to key milestones for design, construction, and operation?
    - **GNWT**: Will take that away.
- **Baseline**: All the subjects in section 7 need site-specific information. Will there be sufficient baseline information for the EA by March 2027?
    - **GNWT**: A lot of the mitigation is common for different locations and can be carried forward across multiple locations, for example, water crossings.
- **Budget**: The operations and maintenance costs are likely to be enormous. There are additional risks if the project is not properly maintained, for perpetuity. GNWT should carefully consider what cutbacks to its other programmes it may have to make to pay for maintenance. Parties do not want to see social funding cut back for road maintenance.
    - **GNWT**: Maintenance has costs, but there are also savings from not rebuilding the winter road every year.

Social and economic considerations

- **Municipal services:** GNWT proposes not including the use of municipal services (water use, health care system, etc.) in the project scope (as highlighted on p.12 of the TOR),

as many of these uses are already authorized or can be addressed in the cumulative effects section. However, some of these effects may be direct, so GNWT should consider both direct and cumulative impacts. Just because municipal infrastructure is already authorized does not mean there won't be serious impacts if pressure on it is greatly increased. If there are potential impacts, GNWT should provide additional resources to increase municipal service capacity before the project begins. An assessment of impacts and proposed mitigations for these impacts is required in the Revised DAR.

- **Regional and local economies**: GNWT proposes changing some bullets under section 5.2.2. to be more inclusive and provide information based on data availability.
- **Human trafficking** GNWT considered human trafficking within impacts on vulnerable populations, which is covered in a few different places in the Revised DAR.
- **Workforce**: GNWT will add an estimate of the labour supply for the Gwich'in region in the TOR and updated for the Dehcho and Sahtú regions. Monitoring and adaptive management will be critical to understand the impacts of education, training, and workforce mobilization, and to observe whether these commitments are working.
- **Training**: Would GNWT be open to providing a section in the Revised DAR that outlines the facilities and opportunities to deliver this work in the Sahtú?
    - GNWT: We will take that away.
- **Emergencies**: How will GNWT improve communities' ability to respond to emergencies on the road?
- **Spill**: We need to ensure there is capacity to clean up spills.
- **Working groups:** GNWT will provide initial funding and staffing to start the working groups, but how will it maintain funding and staffing long term?
- **Cost of living**: Would GNWT be open to the TOR requiring it to consider the cost of living in communities, including potential cost increases, particularly for communities not on the road?
- **Measuring success:** GNWT should measure success using Key Performance Indicators; for instance, GNWT plans to hire 50% of the workforce from the north, but there are no targets for an Indigenous workforce. GNWT should create measurable, trackable indicators to demonstrate the proposed benefits.
- **Commitments**: What are the consequences if GNWT fails to meet its commitments, like ensuring a 50% northern workforce?

Caribou and moose

- NA.

Terrain and permafrost

- **Slumps:** Northern roads like ITH experience significant slumping despite permafrost considerations in their design. Is there anything in the TOR or DAR that includes

practical considerations and cost implications of designing the embankment to withstand slumping and effects from permafrost melt?

- **Road design:** The documents provide little information on granular resources and granular resource management. Some of the ITH problems came from poor-quality granular materials. More discussion is needed on this topic.
- **Sinkholes**: Parties mentioned that when building around Colville Lake, once the topsoil is disturbed, sinkholes form; it gets muddy and watery, and eventually the water drains out. It is often better to build above the topsoil, as it remains more stable that way. GNWT will carefully consider permafrost and these kinds of problems when designing the road.

Water and fish

- **Washouts and overflow response:** There will be monitoring of washouts and overflows (and related issues) on the highway. This process has been successful on ITH; GNWT responded quickly to issues.

Species at risk, wildlife, biodiversity, and air quality

- NA.

Cultural impacts (country food, culture, traditional land use, heritage resources)

- **Country foods** (TOR section 5.2.6.): The assessment should not just be about the meat replacement cost but also about the many other cultural benefits and values of harvesting.

6. Appendix A

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

Mackenzie Valley Highway Environmental Assessment Re-scoping sessions

October 1, 2026

Yellowknife Technical Session Agenda

Thurs. October 1, 2026 – Chateau Nova, Caribou Room

Time	Topics	Organization
8:30-9:00	Coffee and Tea	
9:00-9:30	Opening remarks and introductions	Review Board staff
9:30-9:45	Presentation on the environmental assessment	
9:45-10:15	Overview of the project	GNWT
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-12:00	Scope of development - Route corridor - Existing Winter Road (widening, reclamation) - Water crossings, borrow sources, quarries, maintenance yards, work camps, staging areas, fuel storage, airstrips, barge landings - Relocation of Mackenzie Valley Fibre Line - Maintenance activities Other aspects of the Terms of Reference - Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge - Public engagement - Consideration of alternatives - Assessment methodology	All parties
12:00-1:00	Lunch (provided)	

Yellowknife Technical Session Agenda

1:00-2:30	**Scope of issues** (including geographic and temporal scope)
	- Key lines of inquiry
	  o Social and economic considerations
	  o Caribou, moose, wildlife
	- Subjects of note
	  o Culture, harvesting, country foods, land use, heritage
	  o Terrain, soil, permafrost
	  o Water, fish
	  o Air quality, noise, vegetation, biodiversity
	  o Birds, species at risk
	- Other
	  o Cumulative effects
	  o Effect of the environment on the project
	  o Accidents and malfunctions
	  o Follow-up and monitoring
		All parties

2:30-2:45	**Break**	
2:45-4:45	**Scope of issues continued**	All parties
4:45-5:00	**Wrap up** - Summary and review of undertakings - Closing remarks - Closing prayer	Review Board staff



Introductions

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

- Please have one person from each organization introduce their team.

The Review Board came from the land claims



EAs are part of an integrated system **rooted in land claim agreements**

We do EAs in **all regions** in the Mackenzie Valley

We are **independent**

Board members are nominated by:

- Indigenous governments and land claim organizations
- Federal and territorial governments

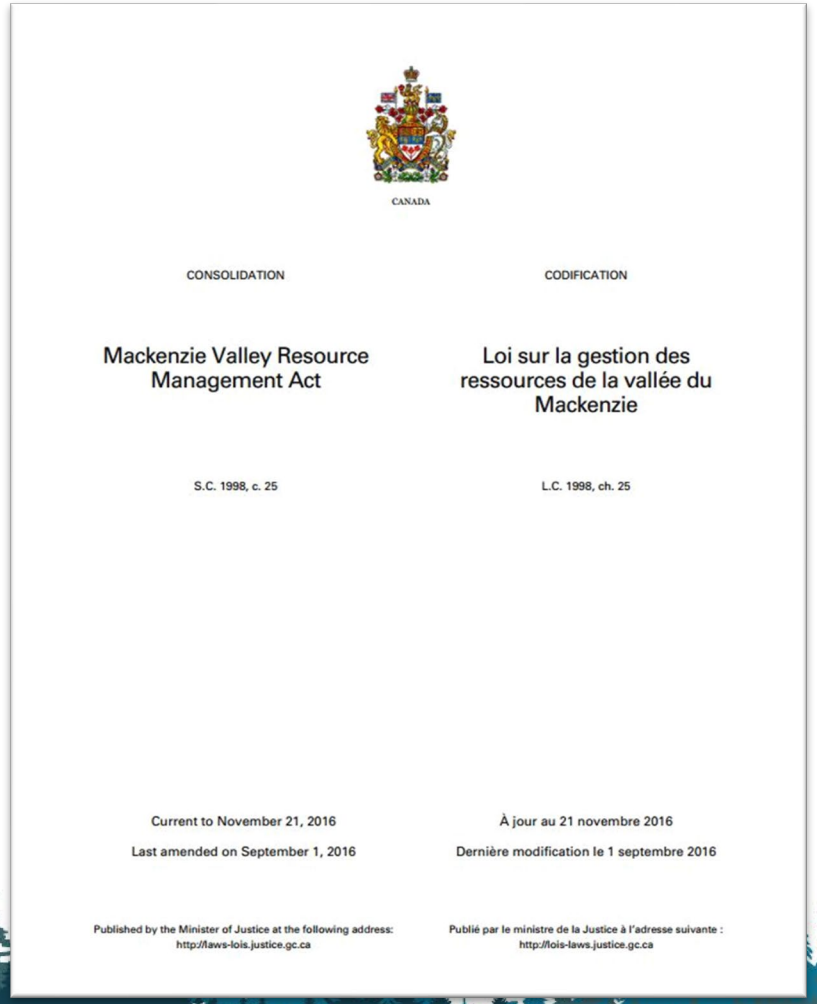
The Review Board follows the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act

The Act requires us to:

a. **protect the environment** from the impacts of development

b. **protect the social, cultural and economic well-being** of Mackenzie Valley residents

c. **preserve the way of life of Aboriginal Peoples** (Section 35 rights)



CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act

Loi sur la gestion des ressources de la vallée du Mackenzie

S.C. 1998, c. 25

L.C. 1998, ch. 25

Current to November 21, 2016

Last amended on September 1, 2016

À jour au 21 novembre 2016

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Scoping
Terms of Reference



What is scoping?
What is a Terms of Reference?

- **Scoping**: describes the focus and boundaries of the assessment
- **Terms of Reference:** document that summarizes what info the GNWT needs to provide:
  - project description
  - impact predictions





What are we scoping?

- **Scope of issues:** What are the most important impacts we should look at?
  - social issues
  - impacts to wildlife
  - cumulative effects, climate change considerations, etc.
  - etc.

What are we scoping?

- **Scope of development:** What parts of the project should be included?
  - Construction and operation of the gravel road
  - Water crossings
  - Winter road reclamation
  - Maintenance activities

- **Scope of assessment includes:**
  - **Geographic scope:** how far impacts go, may be beyond the project area (like a caribou migration route)
  - **Temporal scope:** how far in time will this project and its impacts last



What happens after the technical session

October: deadline to submit comments on revised ToR from GNWT on the **ORS**

Fall 2026: Review Board finalizes the **revised Terms of Reference**

March 2027: GNWT provides its **revised Developer's Assessment Report**

2027: EA continues

TBD: Hearing(s)



What is already in the revised Terms of Reference?





Scope of development (proposed updates)

Section 3.1 of the draft revised TOR (p. 11-13)

Proposed GNWT changes:

- Extended route description to the Dempster Highway between Tsiig. and Inuvik
- Expanded description for 775 km construction and 810 km operation of highway
- Updated language for:
  - Bridge and culvert crossings
  - Borrow sources and quarries
  - Water withdrawal and water use
  - Temporary support infrastructure
  - Permanent maintenance yards
  - Closure of temporary sites
  - Removal and rehabilitation of existing bridges and culverts
  - Closure and reclamation of some portions of the winter road
  - Relocating parts of the MV Fibre Line
  - Maintenance activities (snow clearing, dust control, bridge maintenance)



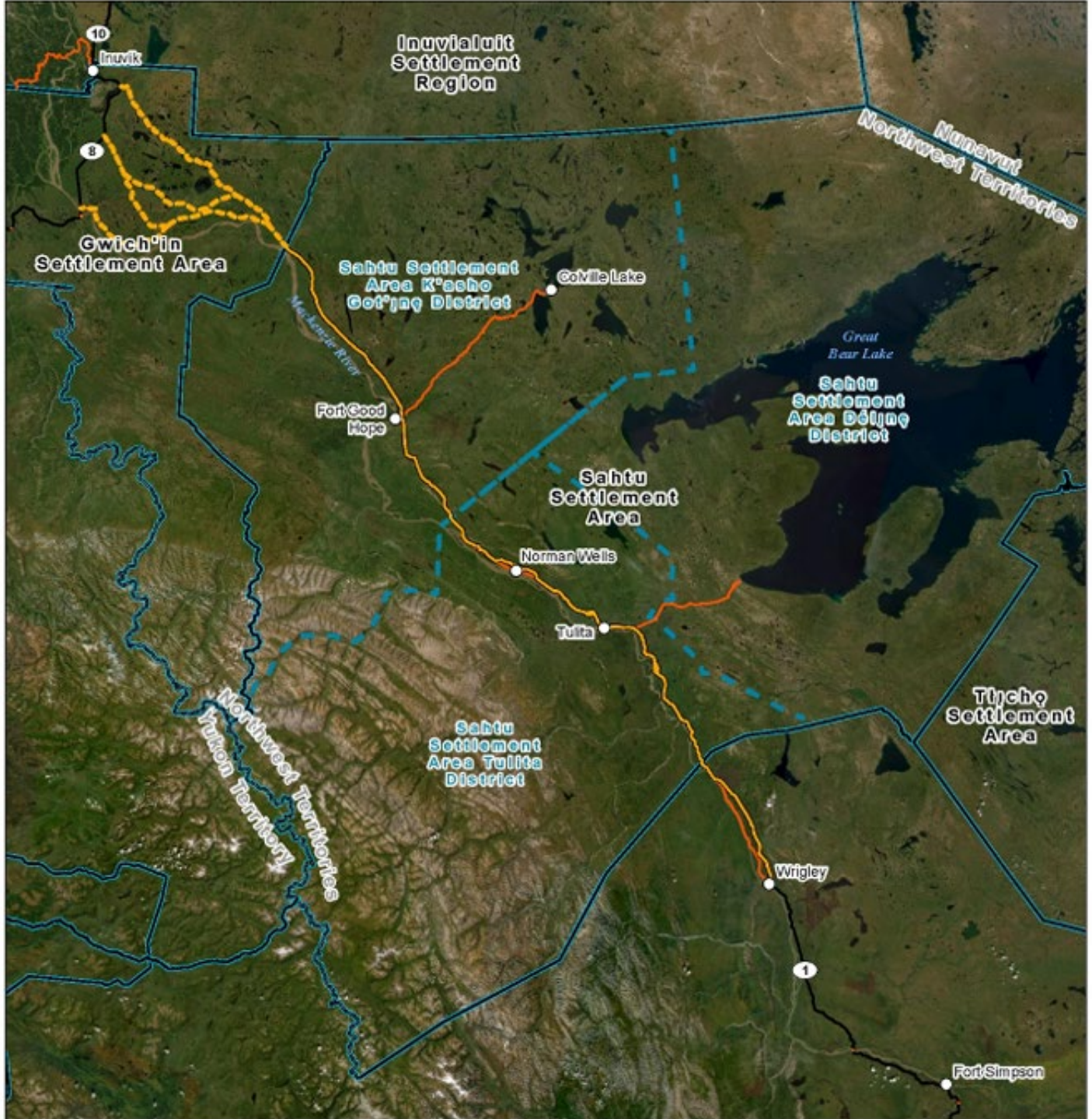
Scope of development (proposed updates)

Section 3.1 of the draft revised TOR (p. 11-13)

GNWT proposes to exclude:

- work in the ISR
- operation and maintenance of the Winter Road
- Great Bear River Bridge
- Mackenzie River (N'Dulee) bridge
- Liard River Bridge
- use of municipal/public infrastructure




Inuvialuit Settlement Region
Nunavut
Northwest Territories
Inuvik
10
8
Gwich'in Settlement Area
Sahtu Settlement Area K'asho Got'ınę District
Colville Lake
Mackenzie River
Great Bear Lake
Fort Good Hope
Sahtu Settlement Area Déline District
Sahtu Settlement Area
Norman Wells
Tulita
Tłı̨chǫ Settlement Area
Sahtu Settlement Area Tulita District
Northwest Territories
Yukon Territory
Wrigley
1
Fort Simpson

Purpose of the Project (proposed updates)
Section 6 of the draft revised TOR (p. 28-30)

- Purpose and need for the project **(new section)**
  - GNWT will describe the purpose, use, cost, and feasibility of the project
- Project components and activities **(updated description)**
- Design basis **(new section)**
  - GNWT will describe status and steps in design development
- Development phases and schedule **(removed capital cost)**
- Life of the project **(no changes)**

Other Aspects of the TOR

1 Introduction **(proposed updates)**

- Pages 4-7 of the draft revised TOR

2 DAR General Requirements **(proposed updates)**

- Pages 9-11 of the draft revised TOR

3.5 Consideration of alternatives **(minor proposed changes)**

- Pages 16-17 of the draft revised TOR

4 Assessment Methodology **(proposed updates)**

- Pages 18-19 of the draft revised TOR



1. Introduction – proposed updates

- Updated project description and route
- Added section about working with Pehdzeh Ki First Nation on re-routing a section of the highway
- Added reference to the GoC referring highway to Major Projects Office, for consideration under the building Canada Act
- Added references to recent documents and process steps

2 DAR Requirements – proposed updates

- Consideration of existing materials **(new)**
  - Describes how GWNT must consider information on the record and lessons from other highways
- Presentation of materials **(proposed update)**
  - Updated to reference other information received during the EA
  - Added plain language summary
- Incorporation of TK **(no change)**
- Public engagement **(no change)**
- Summary materials **(proposed updated language names)**
- Land use plans **(proposed adding the Gwich'in land use plan back)**



3.5 Consideration of alternatives (proposed update)

- Minor proposed changes to wording

4. Assessment methodology (proposed update)

- Proposed removing sections about schedule and method

4. Assessment methodology

4.1. Impact assessment steps

In order to facilitate the consideration of the specific questions posed in this section, the developer is required to address the following impact assessment steps. In assessing impacts on the biophysical and human environment, for each valued component in Section 6, the RevDAR will identify the highway's potential impacts (direct and indirect) on valued components relative to baseline conditions and trends, describe the methods used to identify these impacts in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to fully understand how these conclusions were reached, describe proposed mitigations to reduce or avoid impacts, and predict residual impacts after mitigation. The developer will provide its views on impact significance.

The developer will describe how the predicted impacts are expected to arise from the proposed development. This will include describing the mechanisms for cause and effect and providing supporting references (including where Traditional Knowledge was used). Where professional judgment has been used in determining impacts, this must be made clear. The developer will also provide a discussion on the uncertainty involved with each prediction. For each predicted impact, the developer will describe:

- the nature or type of the impact;
- the geographical range of the impact;
- the timing of the impact (including duration, frequency and extent);
- the magnitude of the impact (what degree of change is expected);
- the reversibility of the impact; and,
- the likelihood and certainty of the impact.

The assessment process requires that predictions be made regarding the impacts of ~~future~~ construction and operations of a highway on dynamic valued ecosystem components. Mitigations may be proposed based on these predictions. ~~Even for projects with more certain construction schedules, these predictions are inherently difficult. However, the proposed construction method of building segments of the highway, and the high degree of uncertainty associated with timing of each segment, add to the uncertainty of the predictions and the applicability and effectiveness of mitigations.~~ The Review Board requests that the developer describe ~~how it will manage these problems associated with~~its approach to predicting impacts and proposing mitigations over a long timeframe.
~~The Review Board sent a letter to the developer on Oct 29, 2013 regarding this issue. The developer provided a response on November 13, 2013. The Review Board now requires~~, including details regarding possible follow-up programs. Please see section 11 of this TOR for details.

4.2. Developer's opinion on significance of impacts

The criteria described above will be used by the developer as a basis for its opinions on the significance of impacts on the biophysical and human environment. The Review Board will make

Scope of assessment (structure)
Section 3.2 of the draft revised TOR (p. 11)

- Overview **(proposed updates)**
- Issue prioritization: key line of inquiry vs. subjects of notes **(no change)**
- Geographic scope **(no change to the definition)**
- Temporal scope **(proposed updates** – project build over 3-4 years not 20**)**
- Consideration of alternatives **(proposed updates)**

Key lines of inquiry: social and economic considerations (minor proposed changes)

Section 7.2 of the draft revised TOR (p. 32)

- Drugs and alcohol
- Safety on the road
- Demand on services like policing, health and social services
- Demand on infrastructure like water, quarries, waste management)



Key lines of inquiry: social and economic considerations (minor proposed changes)

Section 7.2 of the draft revised TOR (p. 32)

- Training (consideration for senior position removed)
- Employment (adjusted to the 3-4 year timeline instead of 20 years)
- Contracting opportunities
- Cost of living
- Contribution to GDP
- Impacts on the traditional economy



Baseline – human environment

Section 5.2 of the draft revised TOR (p. 24)

- Demographics **(no change)**
- Regional and local economies **(proposed minor change)**
- Education, training, and skills (**proposed removal**: describe timing and duration of education and skills development programs, p.25)
- Infrastructure and institutional capacity **(proposed minor change)**
- Human health and community wellness **(no change)**



Key lines of inquiry: Caribou, moose and harvesting (no change)

Section 7.2 and 5.1 (baseline) of the draft revised TOR (p. 33)

- Habitat disturbance
- Sensory disturbance of wildlife
- Changes in behaviour and health
- Changes in movement patterns
- Death and human-wildlife interactions
- Disruption of key life stages (migration, calving, overwintering)



Key lines of inquiry: Caribou, moose and harvesting (no change)

Section 7.2 and 5.1 (baseline) of the draft revised TOR (p. 33)

- Changes in population cycles and predator-prey relationships
- Contaminants in harvested animals
- Changes in access and impacts from hunting pressures
- Disturbance of harvest (effort, travel, costs, levels, quality)
- Change in non-resident hunting and fishing



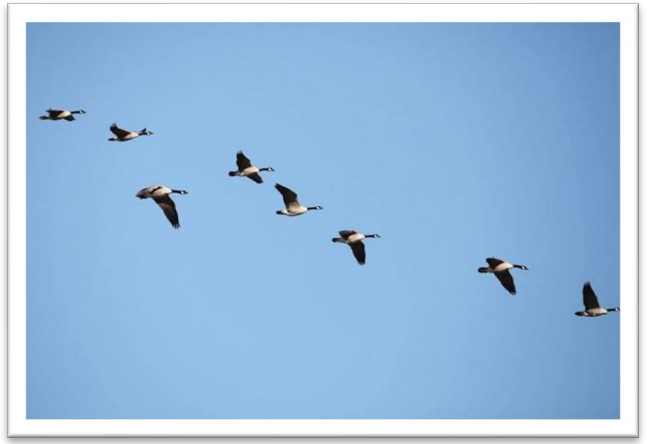
Subject of notes – minor proposed changes
Section 7.3 and 5.1 (baseline) of the draft revised TOR

- **Terrain, soils, and permafrost**: existing thermal disturbance from highway and pipeline
- **Air quality**: impacts **on** carbon sinks from land use change
- **Noise**: **no change**
- **Water and sediment (restructured)**: effects on culturally important resources, impacts from quarries
  - In Section 5.1 (baseline): basis for selection of major water drainage and watercourses *removed*



Subject of notes – minor proposed changes
Sections 7.3 and 5.1 (baseline) of the draft revised TOR

- **Species at risk and species of concern:** consideration of the Gwich'in Land Use Plan
- **Fish and fish habitat**: introduction of invasive species
- **Wildlife and wildlife habitat: no change**
- **Birds and bird habitat (waterfowl and waterbirds): no change**
- **Vegetation**: impacts on vegetation in communities
- **Biodiversity**: consideration of the Gwich'in Land Use Plan



Subject of notes – minor proposed changes
Sections 7.3 and 5.2 (baseline) of the draft revised TOR

- **Country foods**: **no change**
- **Culture and traditional land use**: **no change**
- **Land use**: consideration of the Gwich'in Land Use Plan
- **Heritage resources**: **no change**



Other (minor proposed changes)

- **Cumulative effects – minor changes:**
  - Now includes impacts to ITK Highway and Dempster Highway
  - Could include consideration of the 3 bridges
- **Effects of the environment on the project – minor changes:**
  - Now includes changes in temperature, wildfires, droughts
  - Could include a more important consideration of other climate change impacts, like permafrost melt



Other (minor proposed changes)

- **Accidents and malfunctions – no change**
- **Follow-up and monitoring – minor proposed changes:**
  - Now includes defining responsibilities and resources for monitoring roles



Next Steps

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

October 15: Pehdzéh Kı First Nation community re-scoping session

October 30: Party comments due on the Online Review System

November 13: Responses to comments on the ORS

November: MVEIRB released draft revised TOR and next steps

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

Questions?

Máhsı

7. Appendix B

Mackenzie Valley Highway Project

Project Description Overview for Terms of Reference Scoping

September 2026

Government of
Northwest Territories

Agenda

- Building a Stronger NWT Economy
- Project Objectives
- Project Overview
- What We Have Heard
- Next Steps

Building a Stronger NWT Economy

- **Mandate Commitment:** Support economic growth through infrastructure that improves connectivity and access to resources.

- **Strategic Focus Areas Specific to MVH:**
  - **Transportation Corridors**: Unlocking access to remote communities and resource-rich areas.
  - **Partnerships**: Advancing projects with Indigenous governments, industry, and federal partners.

Project Objectives

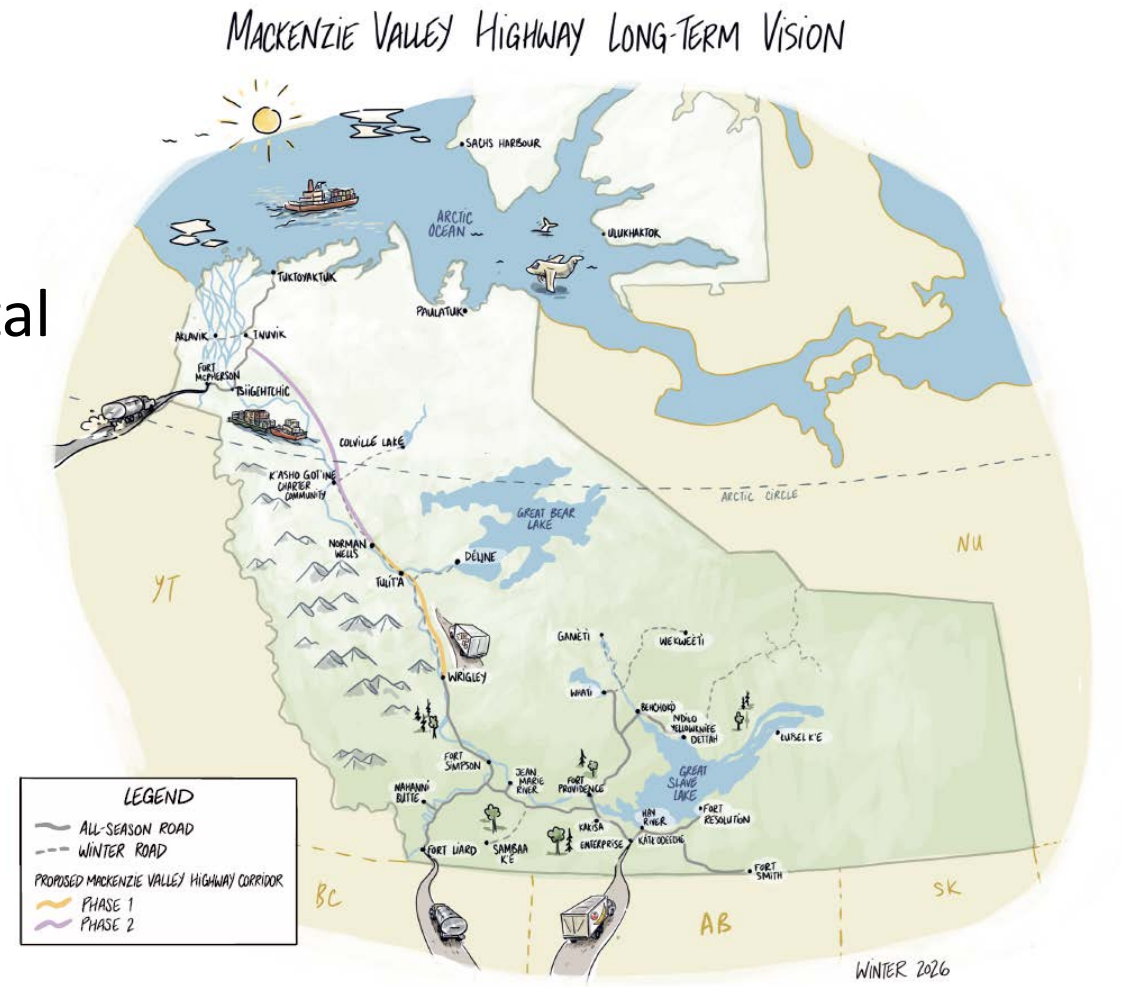
- **Improve / protect supply chains** and **stabilize the cost of resupply** for northern communities
- **Boost the local economy** through **resource development** and **tourism**
- Enhance **year-round highway access** from Southern Canada through the Dehcho and Sahtu regions and to the Arctic Ocean
- Enhance Canada's **Arctic sovereignty and security**



Project Vision

- ~ 325 km from Wrigley to Tulita and Norman Wells
  - Currently undergoing Environmental Assessment

- ~ 485 km from Norman Wells to Dempster Highway



Project History

2013:

- Land Use Permit application submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board for the full Wrigley to Inuvik route based on Project Description Reports co-developed with Indigenous partners

2015:

- Project was re-scoped to focus on the Wrigley to Norman Wells section due to funding constraints
- Review Board issued revised Terms of Reference for the Environmental Assessment

2023:

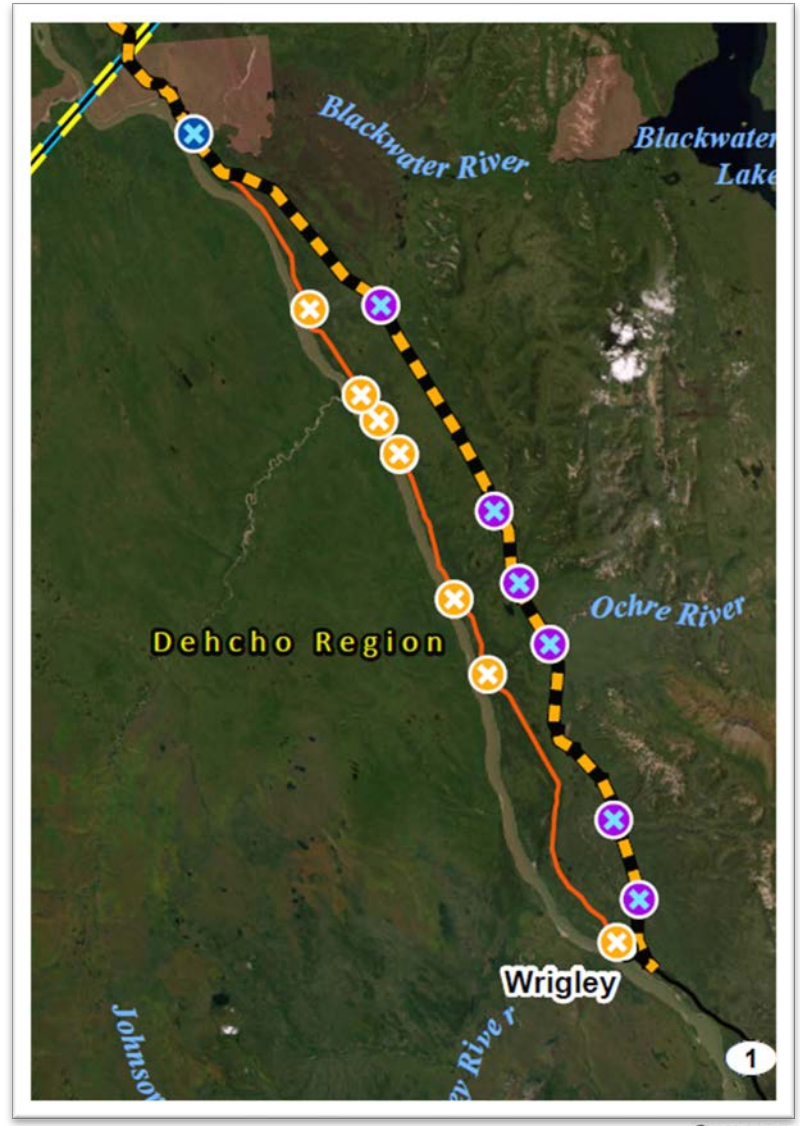
- Submission of the Developer's Assessment Report



Project History

2025-2026:

- GNWT paused the review to address concerns about the potential impact of the proposed highway.
- The GNWT worked with Indigenous Governments and organizations to address concerns resulting in realignment of the project in select areas.



Project History

- **March 12, 2026:** Project referred to the Major Projects Office

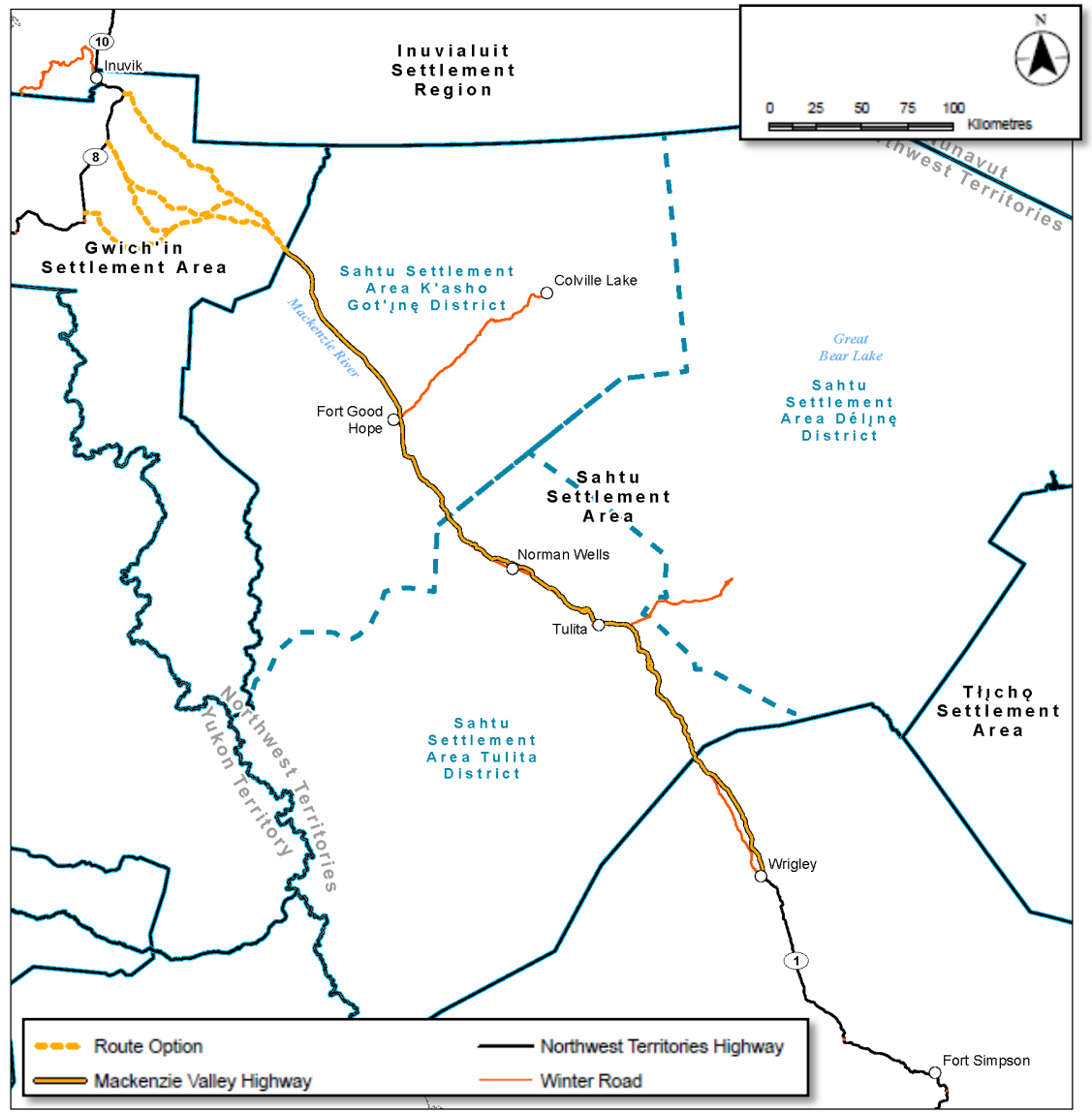
- **June 24, 2026:** Canada initiated process to consider listing as a Project of National Interest under the *Building Canada Act*

- Based on the significant federal support for the project, the GNWT has re-scoped the project to integrate the Norman Wells to Dempster segment into the project.



Project Overview

- Approximately 775 km of new highway to be constructed
  - 106 km in Dehcho Region
  - 487 km in Sahtu Region
  - 182 km in Gwich’in Region
- Connects to sections of road that are already built
- Total length approximately 810 km



Project Summary

- Two-lane gravel road with intermittent pullouts
- 80 km/h speed limit
- 60 m wide right-of-way (ROW)
- Temporary and permanent borrow sources
- 30 – 35 new bridges between Wrigley and Dempster Highway
- Project connects to:
  - Canyon Creek all-season Access Road, Prohibition Creek Access Road
  - Great Bear River Bridge
  - Many existing bridges on the MV Winter Road

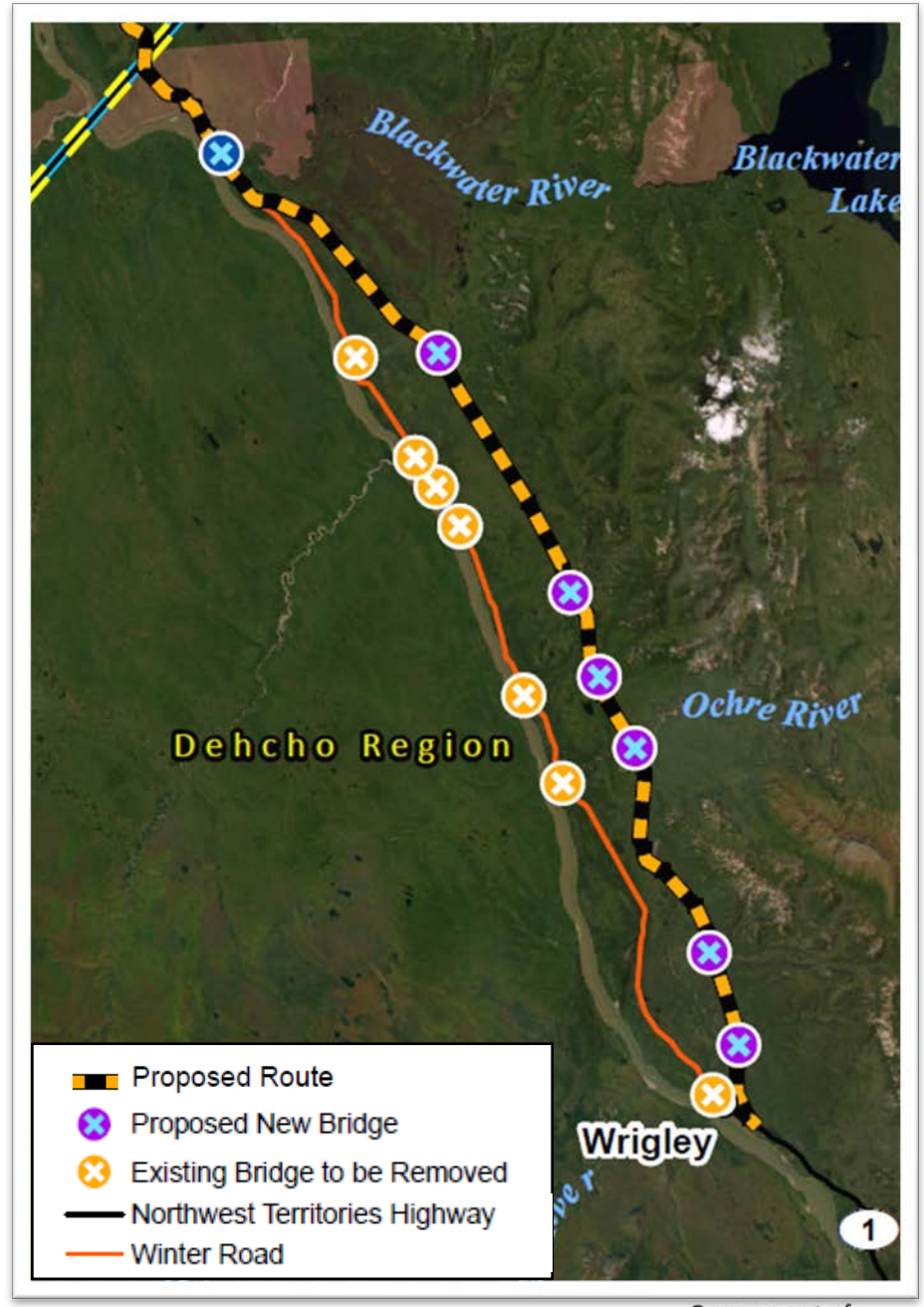
Project Summary

- Project does not include:
  - Construction of the Great Bear River Bridge (being advanced as a separate project)
  - Construction of the Mackenzie River (N'Dulee Crossing) and Liard River bridges (will be advanced as separate projects)
  - Operations and maintenance of the MV Winter Road, including repair and replacement of existing watercourse crossing structures, until the MVH (Project) is open for use
  - Use of existing and authorized municipal, commercial, or public infrastructure or services (e.g, waste disposal facilities, transportation services, highways)

Project Route

Dehcho Region:

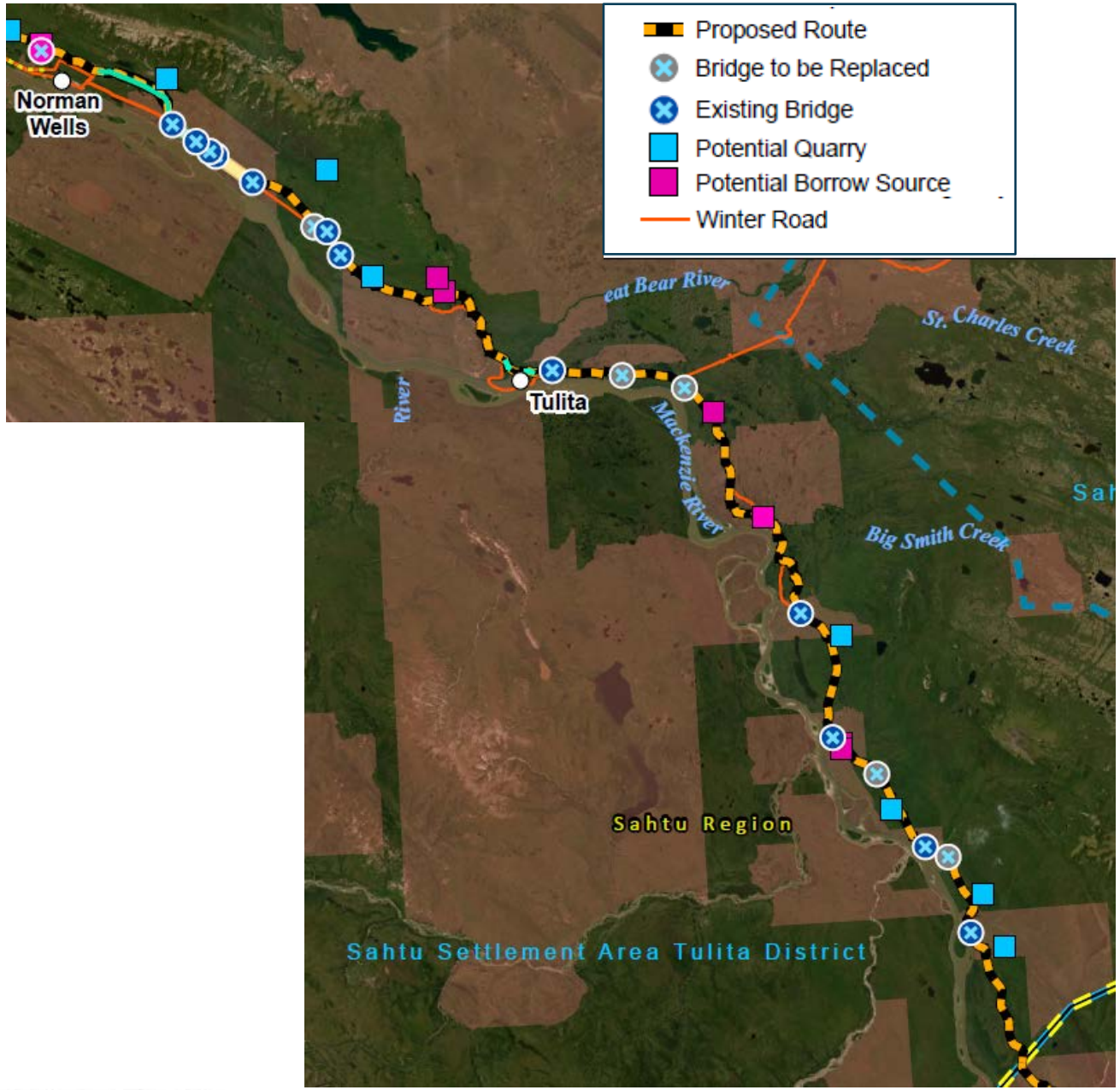
- Route is located inland from the Mackenzie River between Wrigley and the Blackwater River to avoid sensitive areas
- Bridges on the MVWR will be removed



Project Route

Sahtu Region South of Norman Wells:

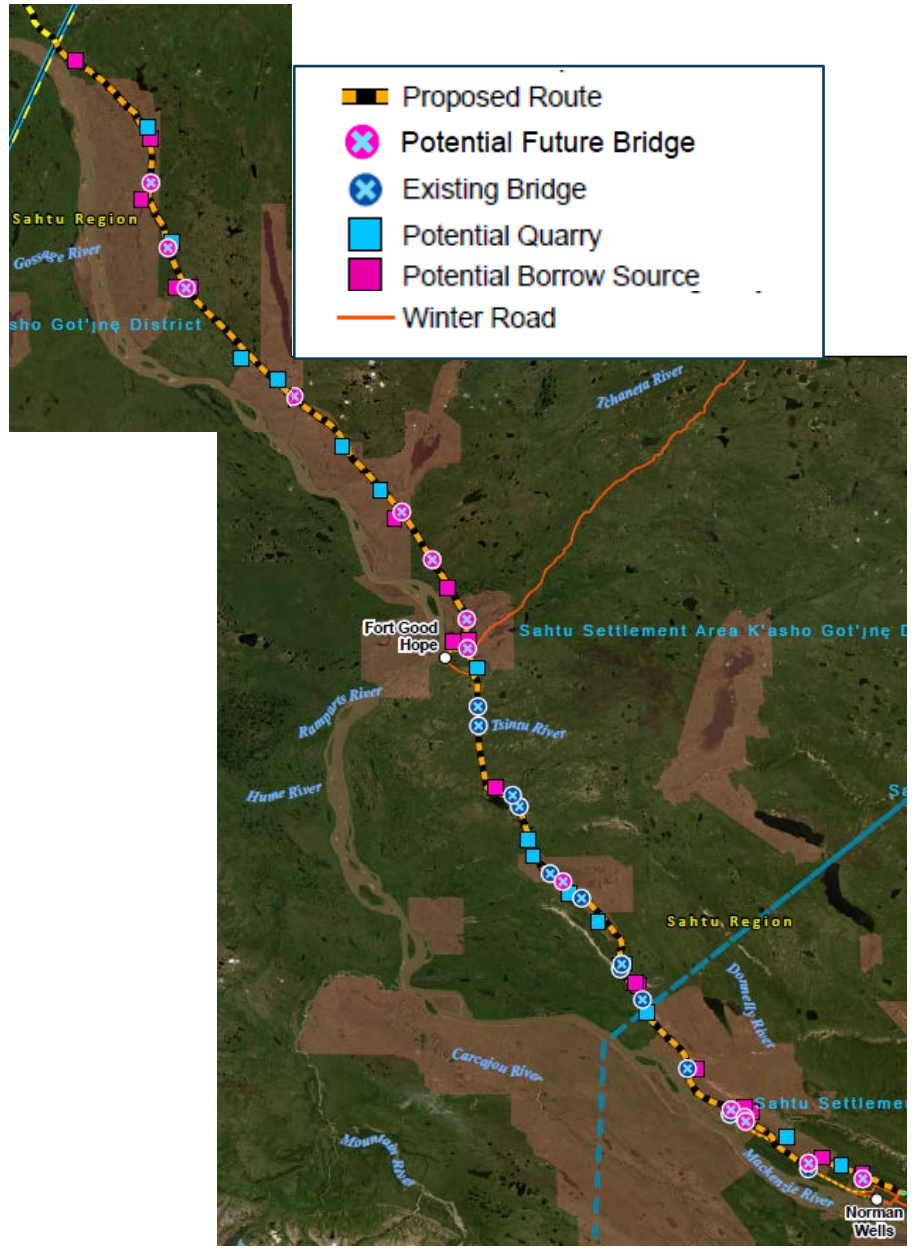
- Route mostly follows the MVWR, except to avoid Bear Rock (Petınıɔah), and north of Big Smith Creek
- Route connects to existing bridges on the MVWR. Some of these bridges will be replaced.



Project Route

Sahtu Region North of Norman Wells:

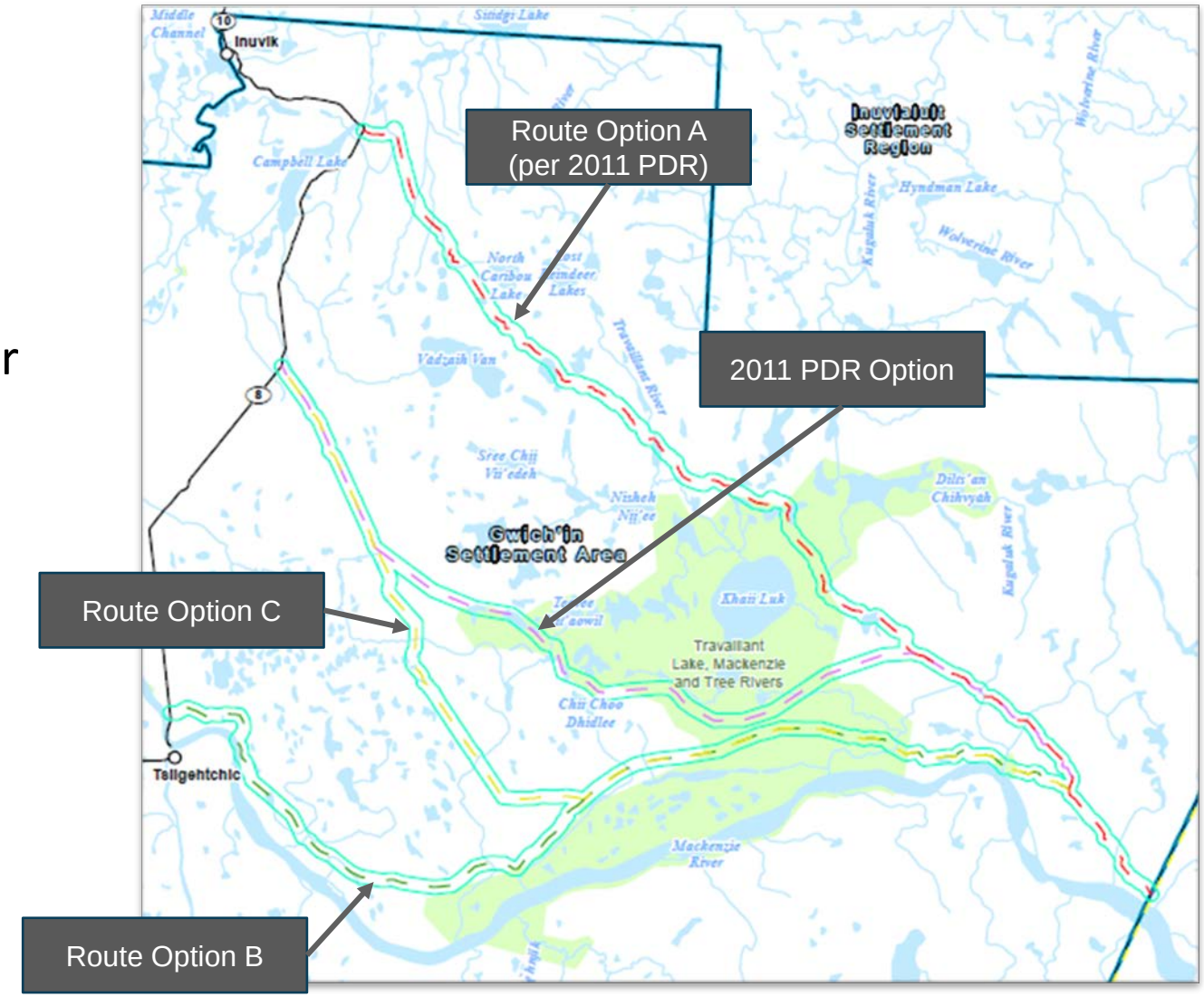
- Route is per 2012 PDR
- Route mostly follows the MVWR, except between Norman Wells and Billy Creek, and at Oscar Creek
- Route connects to existing bridges on the MVWR up to Fort Good Hope
- Route by-passes Fort Good Hope
- North of Fort Good Hope the route generally follows the MV Fibre Line



Project Route

Gwich'in Region:

- 4 potential routes
- Potential routes are currently identified within a 2 km wide corridor
- Engagement with Gwich'in organizations to select a preferred route is ongoing



Project Activities

- Mobilization of equipment, materials, and fuel to staging areas. This includes potential new barge landings at Little Chicago and Fort Good Hope
- Clearing of Right-of-way (ROW)
- Construction of winter access trail, including water use
- Operation of temporary work camps and workspaces
    - Large camps of up to 200 people
    - Smaller camps of 20 – 40 people
- Construction of permanent maintenance yards
- Waste and wastewater management



Project Activities

- Development of quarries (rock) and borrow sources (gravel)
  - Year-round access road
  - Blasting, crushing, stockpiling
  - Temporary sources will be reclaimed
  - Some sources will become permanent sources for highway maintenance
- Road (embankment) construction
  - First layer placed in winter, then year-round
  - Road cuts will be needed in places
  - Construction advances 40 km per year, per segment



Project Activities

- Construction of bridges
  - Some bridges will need in-stream piers
  - Bridges assembled on site
- Bridge removal
  - Bridges not on the new highway route will be removed
- Culverts will be installed to maintain flows and fish passage
- Relocation of portions of the MV Fibre Line will be required



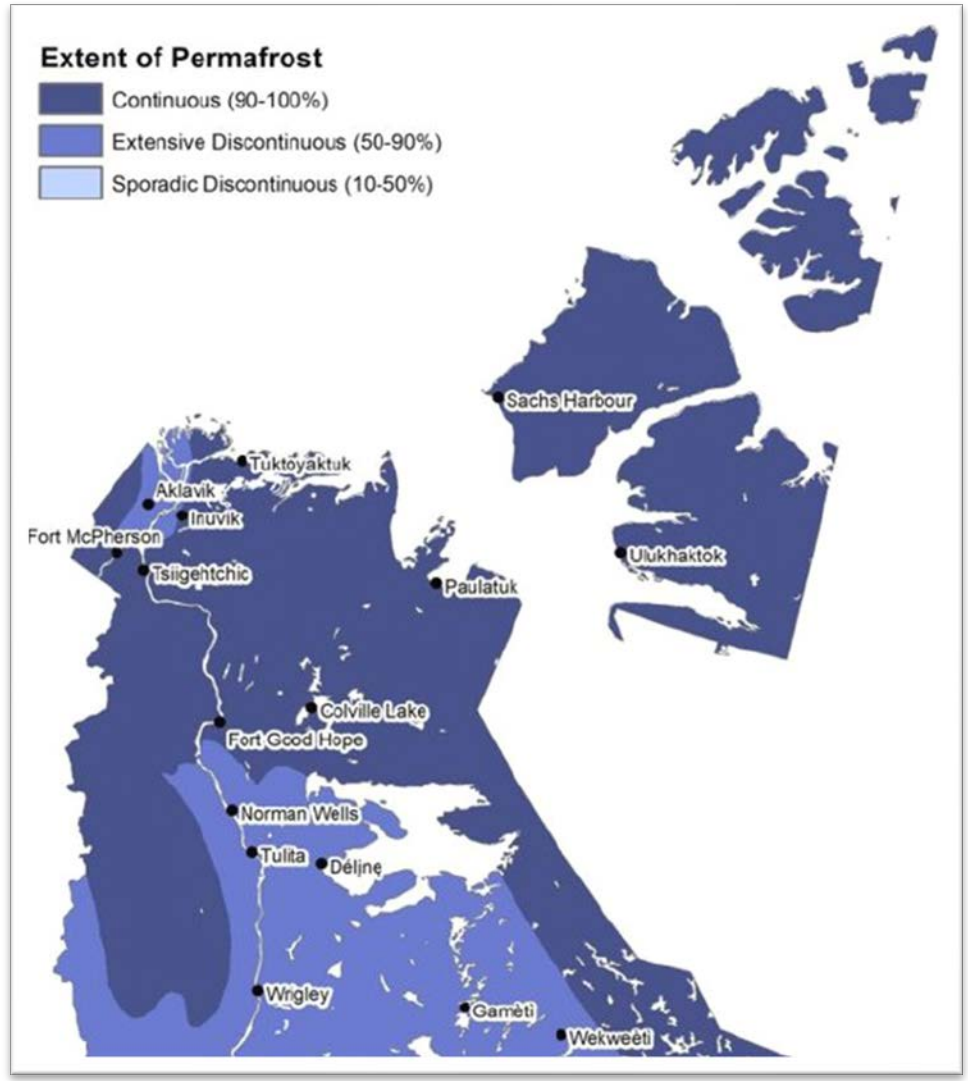
Project Activities

- Use of water for camp use, construction, and dust control
- Reclamation of temporary workspaces and MV Winter Road
- Demobilization
- Long term operations and maintenance:
    - Snow clearing
    - Grading
    - Dust control
    - Bridge and culvert maintenance
    - ROW brushing



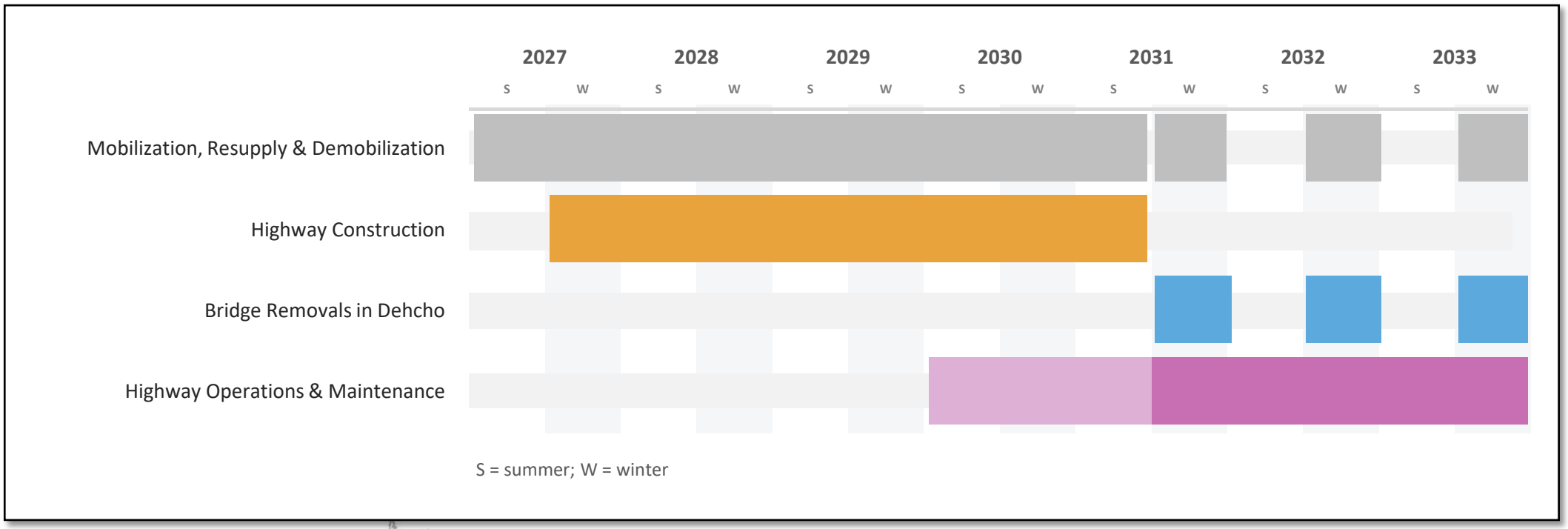
Design Considerations

- Traffic up to 200 vehicles per day (average)
- Permafrost and soils
- Protection of fish and fish habitat
- Protection of sensitive areas and resources
- Climate change
- Icings and overflow



Schedule Overview

- The GNWT plans to start early construction works in late 2027.
- Portions of the highway may be open in 3 – 4 years.



What We Have Heard During Previous Engagement

- Topics of focus during previous engagement:
  - Training, employment, and business opportunities including procurement
  - Safety and security of the public and vulnerable community members
  - Changes in harvest patterns / harvest access (fish and wildlife)
  - Impacts from spills
  - Dust
  - Changes to wildlife movements
  - Impacts to spiritually/culturally sensitive areas



Upcoming Engagement Opportunities

- GNWT has a number of upcoming opportunities to engage on the project including:
  - Helicopter tours with Knowledge Holders to review routing options in northern portion of the project (currently underway)
  - Project Description (September and October)
  - Potential Effects and Mitigations (November)
  - Community Readiness Strategy and Construction Management Plans (September to construction start)
- Engagements will be a mixture of targeted meetings and community meetings - if there is interest, virtual engagement meetings can be held.
- Feedback received during the engagement will be considered in the assessment and integrated in the Revised Developer's Assessment Report.

Next Steps



- Engagement with Indigenous Governments, communities, and other Affected Parties
- Complete Indigenous Knowledge Studies or Traditional Land and Resource Use Studies (as requested by Indigenous Governments)
- Complete additional Environmental, Engineering, and Socio-economic studies to inform project design
- Preparation of the Revised Developer's Assessment Report to be submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board in March 2027

Questions?

Email: MVH@gov.nt.ca
Project Website: www.inf.gov.nt.ca/en/MVH

8. Appendix C

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

Sign-in sheet Environmental Assessment - Mackenzie Valley Highway project – Technical Re-scoping Sessions Yellowknife – October 1, 2026	
Name	**Organization**
1. Caroline Mono	GNWT - INT
2. Oliver Sedzhuyan	GNWT - INF
3. Didar Islam	GNWT - INF
4. Jennifer Loughery.	DFO
5. Mike Auge	GNWT - INF
6. Nancy Njerere	GNWT - ECC
7. ERICA BONHOMME	K'alo Stantec
8. Tyla Ahluwalia	MPCO
9. Melissa Pinto	ECCC
10. 11. Alain Gagnon	CanNor NPMO
12. Giannina Karli	CanNor NPMO.
13. Dan Coombs	Canada Energy Regulator
14. Janelle van der Brink	WLWB
15. Alison Heslop.	GNWT - ECC

Mackenzie Valley Review Board

Sign-in sheet Environmental Assessment - Mackenzie Valley Highway project – Technical Re-scoping Sessions Yellowknife – October 1, 2026	
Name	**Organization**
16. Jan Henebery	DPRA Canada (GNWT)
17. Lorraine Seale	GNWT
18. Jeremy Freeman	ECCC - CWS
19. SUFIYAN BHARUCHA	GNWT - INF
20. DAVID LIVINGSTONE	EISC
21.	
22.	
23.	
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27.	
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Online participants	
Name (original name)	**Email**
GTC Lands	
Isabelle Duclos (ECCC-CWS)	
melissa pink - MVEIRB	
Erin Barnes (Legal Counsel - MVEIRB) (Erin Barnes)	
Tas-Tsi Catholique (MVEIRB) (Tas-Tsi Catholique)	
Stephane Drolet (MPO)	
Lisa McDonald - NWRRC	
Douglas	
Cassidy Dutchak	
Alison Heslep	
Jenna MacNeil, Town of Inuvik	
Scott Kidd, TC	
Brian Davidson	
Christopher Aguirre - Transport Canada	
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Michael Staniewski (CIRNAC) (StaniewskiM)	
Jane Henderson# Pehdzeh Ki First Nation (Jane Henderson)	
Conrad Baetz - GLUPB	
Kate Mansfield	kmansfield@reviewboard.ca
Christopher Aguirre - Transport Canada (Christopher Aguirre)	
Leigh-Ann Williams-Jones# GRRB (GRRB)	
Tatum Mindus	
CharliePalmer	
Jeremy Freeman (ECCC-CWS)	
Kim Wickens	
Josh	
Natalie	
Anita Ogaa - GNWT (Anita Ogaa)	
Aurora McNeely	
Kanda Gnama_GTC	
Sufiyan_Bharucha_GNWT_INF	
Gordon Chamberlain (NPP - Transport)	
Nicholas Wasilik - DFO	
Hamlet of Tulita - Samantha Bayha	
Julie Anderson (HC/SC, she/her)	
p_unger	
Donna’s	
Conrad Baetz - GLUPB (Conrad Baetz)	
a_mccall	
lpickell	
LWB - Andy Wheeler	
David Codzi AKLC Sahtu	
Darin Woodbury - PIDO Production LTD.	
Chris Rose (CIRNAC)	
monitor	
Sally - Tulita	
Malorey Nirlungayuk (MVRB) She/Her	
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Sean Yeulet	
David Livingstone	
Douglas	
Megan Mindus	
Scott Kidd, Transport Canada	
Shannon Bower# PlanIt North (for SRRB) (Shannon Bower, PlanIt North)	
Simon Tooogood (MVEIRB)	
Wiktoria Klimczak	
Jackie Barker - Transport Canada	
Ayesha	